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JPRS L/9119

2 June 1980

# South and East Asia Report

(FOUO 4/80)



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## SOUTH AND EAST ASIA REPORT

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INTER-ASIAN AFFAIRS

KHMER SEREI FACTIONS, BORDER ACTIVITIES REPORTED

Paris LE NOUVEL OBSERVATEUR in French 7-13 Apr 80 pp 94-110

[Article by special envoy Rene Backmann: "Cambodia-Thailand: The Refugee Racket"]

[Text] Helpless, gaunt, starving people: These are the some 500,000 survivors of the Cambodian hell, parked in the refugee camps on the Thai border. As if the tragedy they have gone through and their destitution were not enough, they are the prey of the most odious of rackets. For the new "warlords" -- former Lon Nol officers, Red Cambodians who have eluded Vietnamese standardization and all sorts of traffickers -- have imposed their rule on the 14 camps where the damned of Asia are accumulating. The basic necessities: medicines, gold and especially rice, are in the hands of a new breed of adventurers: Chinese, Thai and Americans, who try to profit from them. But in this "no man's land" of daily horror, this humanity adrift in fact eludes all control. Our special envoy Rene Backmann managed to live among the refugees for a few days, to meet their tormentors, hear their stories and their lies. His report reminds one of a remake -- alas, a real one! -- of "Apocalypse Now."

Funny things happen on the border between Thailand and Cambodia. According to a United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) report, over 500,000 "displaced persons" have for months been accumulating along this undefined line. And nearly a million Cambodians, scattered throughout the border districts of their country, depend for their sustenance on food aid entering Cambodia from distribution centers set up by the Red Cross International Committee (CICR) and UNICEF with the aid of the Royal Thai Army.

Between Trat on the Gulf of Siam and Nan Yuan, where the three borders of Laos, Cambodia and Thailand meet, we find assembled in 14 precarious and threatened "urban districts" what is without a doubt the biggest concentration of refugees, displaced persons and illegal immigrants on earth.

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And this humanity adrift, this people held hostage is manipulated, tricked, exploited, the victim of rackets perpetrated by one of the worst band of adventurers, traffickers, bastards and murderers that could be assembled in 10 years of merciless war. These warlords who pose as resistance leaders, these warrant officers who have deserted and play at being warlords impose a climate of violence and insecurity the length of the border which today weighs just as heavily on the daily anxiety of the refugees as does the obsessive fear of the war and hunger they are trying to escape from.

Traffickers in wood, gold, rice, women, weapons and diamonds, they have perfectly well realized what a small band of mercenaries armed with an anticommunist line could stand to gain on this teeming border. "They are no better than bandits,"<sup>1</sup> said an officer of the Thai Supreme Command where they are not too fussy about the political morality of resistance leaders as long as they swear they want to kill Vietnamese or Red Cambodians. Furthermore, the "operations" they mount fool no one as to their real objectives.

Up to now, everyone who has been there: Thai soldiers and officials, representatives of the international organizations, doctors, diplomats, have maintained that they only resorted to arms to defend their trade monopolies or extend their sphere of influence, that is, the territory of their rackets. The fight against Heng Samrin's army, the action against the Vietnamese Bo Doi, this is not their business. They leave that to the Red Cambodians entrenched in the dense brush of Phnom Malai or in the caves of the Chaine des Cardamomes and to a few hard cores of Khmer Serei, anticommunists or Sihanoukists.

It is quite clear. The Cambodian refugees can expect nothing more than a useless and illusory "protection," very dearly paid for when everything is going well and a few aimless machine-gun bursts when things are going badly, from the MLNC and the Angkor Cambodian Liberation Front.

This parasitic exploitation of the disinherited has reached its highest degree of organization and profit in the Aranyaprathet region, the heart of this swarming mass of misery and trafficking. There, two-thirds of the Cambodian refugees in Thailand live in an area covering less than 100 km. There, some of the most cynical vultures the Cambodian tragedy has spawned are getting rich. They call themselves Captain Van Saren, alias Marshal Von Atitvong, head of the MLNC, and Captain In Sakhan, head of the Angkor Cambodian Liberation Front, and hold sway over Nong Mak Moun (Camp 204) and Nong Samet (Camp 007).

To see them in their fiefs, when you come from Bangkok along National Highway 33, you have to turn left as you enter Aranyaprathet and take the road that climbs to the north in the direction of Ta Phraya. After 300 km of straight, monotonous highway, passing through ricefields where water buffalo wallow, this road, lined with gardens, pagodas and teak houses on pilings, is a real pleasure. Three km of heavy traffic, light trucks,

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motorcycles, coaches, trucks loaded with bundles and passengers to the first checkpoint: Everyone out. The farther we get from Aranyaprathet, the more numerous they are, these barriers manned by soldiers in camouflaged combat uniforms, with heavy helmets on their heads and M-16's in their hands, who inspect the packages belonging to this talkative mob of professional or amateur tradesmen.

For this small, jammed road which runs in a straight line flanked by shrubs follows the Cambodian border a few km away. Of course, no one knows exactly where the border is. Beyond Aranyaprathet and the bridge across Luek Klong, there are no longer any barbed wire entanglements nor marker posts on the laterite trails that thrust eastwards. We only know that, here and there, lost among the minefields, there are a few old milestones forgotten by the French colonizers.

First leg of the trip: Nong Mak Moun. Are we still in Thailand? Are we already in Cambodia? How can we know? The entrance to the camp is no more than 5 or 6 km from the little Ta Phraya road at the end of a brand-new laterite trail that runs in long zigzags through the ricefields. "United Nations, liberate our country!" "Communists, get out of Cambodia!" Written in English, the white banners strung between the first camp buildings surrounding the entrance say it very clearly: no "humanitarian neutrality" at Camp 204. We are not at Sa Kao or Kao I Dang, "official" camps administered by the UNHCR, where any political activity is in principle prohibited, even though Red Cambodians are concentrated here and Khmer Serei there, at the request of the Thai Government. Mak Moun is a concentration of refugees and also the headquarters of Captain and Marshal Van Saren, the political and military head of the MLNC.

How many exiled Cambodians are there at Nong Mak Moun? One of the camp leaders who has big ideas says 300,000. The international organizations — CICR, UNICEF — distribute food there for from 90,000 to 100,000 persons, but their makeshift system for counting them, which consists of multiplying the number of cabins by eight, does not come up with much more than 45,000. Everyone knows that Van Saren and his friends expand the figures and go so far as to direct refugees to Mak Moun with weapons in hand to get an increased allotment of rice, oil and canned goods from the international organizations. Following a symbolic distribution of free aid which serves as bait, the surplus — enormous — is resold for gold to the Cambodian refugees and peasants who come for supplies from this side of the border and who are ready to give up their last objects of value, buried during the tyranny of the Red Cambodians, for a few bags of rice. For months now, a spontaneous market has established itself about Mak Moun, tolerated, if not encouraged, by certain Thai soldiers who, they say, profit by it. Thousands of Thai tradesmen from Aranyaprathet and even Bangkok sell their wares there, right on the ground, everything and anything. Sarongs, lighter fluid, needles and thread, soap, cosmetics, buttons, combs, hairpins, ball-point pens, Coca-Cola, local beer, soft drinks, cans of condensed milk, fruit, vegetables. And all this at three times — even five times — official Thai prices. Here and there the money changers

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do their job. Their offices are Spartan: a piece of cloth laid out on the ground, a small pharmacist's scale, a jar to store the gold brought in by the refugees and a few enormous wads of 10, 50, 100 and 500-baht bills.<sup>2</sup> Between morning and evening, the wads melt and the jar fills with gold.

Ultraliberal to the point of caricature, the Thai economy has lost no time in integrating this new clientele concentrated on its borders. As a result, Aranyaprathet, the border town that had vegetated since the closing of the Bangkok-Phnom Penh highway, is giddy with its new-found prosperity. The streets throng with crowds, the piles of sarongs overflow onto the sidewalks. The motorcycle-cab drivers and vendors of soup, doughnuts and Coca-Cola are making money hand over fist. People wait in line for a table at the Chinese restaurant on the main intersection.

"Do you want to see Mr Van Saren?" The question is more of an invitation. Bamboo armchairs and a low table arranged in a square under a shelter of bamboo and blue cloth: the head man's office.

Here is the captain. About 50, pepper and salt hair, cut short and combed back, he is wearing a blue shirt with a Chinese collar, trousers made of brown synthetic material and plastic sandals. He does not speak French and apologizes. His secretary-aide de camp-interpreter translates his statements into a chaotic but precise kind of French. The captain sits down in one of the bamboo armchairs underneath the emblem of his movement: a mythical monster devouring a red circle. In Cambodian mythology, this monster is Reahou, who devours the Moon. In the mystic-ideological rubbish the interpreter dishes up, the monster represents the Cambodian people in arms and the red circle communism. Over our heads, nailed to the walls, boards containing military training information, painted in gouache, represent the chief types of Soviet tanks in use in the Vietnamese Army: BTR 50, ASU 57, T 54, T 55. Red dots indicate the most vulnerable spots. A poster depicts Rosalynn Carter bending over a Cambodian child. They bring us glasses of icewater. They distribute MLNC insignia among us. "Our movement has been in existence since 1975," the interpreter explains, translating what Van Saren says. "It was founded when the Red Cambodians entered Phnom Penh. At that time, Captain Van Saren, who was serving in President Lon Nol's army, in the infantry and the tank corps, reached the forest with other soldiers and civilians. We have here in the camp 800 men under arms and in Cambodia nearly 60,000 fighters..." "Be especially sure to tell them," Van Saren insisted, "that we do not receive enough aid to feed everybody every day." Nevertheless, not 10 feet from me I had just seen World Food Program bags, shipped from Togo, piled up, unopened, under a shelter.

On that day, Van Saren did not pull out his file of letters of support. Some of them come from the French extreme right. Van Saren's ties with the international and local extreme right are known by everyone on the border. Camp 204 "soldiers" sport fetishes blessed by a well-known Thai

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monk: Kittiwuttho, the anticommunist shock-troop monk. The same one who is in the habit of saying: "Killing a communist is not the same as killing a human being. Killing a demon is the duty of every Thai..."<sup>3</sup>

For the time being, the demons can rest easy. The danger will not come from Mak Moun Camp. Van Saren's soldiers, kids armed with Chinese Kalashnikovs and M-16's, appear to be more highly motivated by the theft of motorcycles and quartz watches in the villages or other camps than by the struggle against the invader. Mak Moun's defense lines, about which the secretary-aide de camp-translator speaks in the most serious manner, are no more than little furrows that would not stop a bicycle and it is not the few logs, hastily stacked here and there on the fringes of the camp, that might protect the guards from bullets or shrapnel if there were any. For you can come and go as you please within the borders of the camp and stroll through the forest without managing to wake more than one or two soldiers. The one who came to meet us, unarmed, was just barely coming out of a drunken stupor. Another one, a few meters away with a bottle of beer in his hand, was watching his wife do the laundry.

"One shouldn't let oneself be fooled about Van Saren's background," said one of those who know him well — and in Bangkok they are not hard to find. "They say he left Cambodia over 5 years ago to fight against Sihanouk. That's a lie. He left Phnom Penh thrown out by Sihanouk and set himself up in Phnom Malai near the Thai border, not to fight but to organize trafficking along the border with the complicity of the Thai. From 1975 to 1978, he remained in his country home in Aranyaprathet. People started to talk about him again after the dramatic episode in Preah Vihear in June 1979 when 45,000 Cambodian refugees were driven back into Cambodia by the Thai Army." Some of those who escaped this massacre and had fled to the southwest gathered together near the village of Nong Mak Moun and constituted the first core of refugees at Camp 204.

As the Vietnamese units and Heng Samrin's troops, launched on a vast cleanup operation of the Red Cambodian bases, deployed on the other side of the border, the swarm of refugees, dazed, exhausted, starving, flocked into the undefined no man's land between the two countries.

The Thai Army had decreed the region off limits and the humanitarian organizations had no right to oversee these camps. Everything was for sale. For 10,000 baht (\$500), a rich refugee could get a pass permitting him to go from no man's land into Thai territory. At Camp 511, Thai Army drivers demanded one-and-a-half gold taels of refugees to stop there for a while. If they did not receive them, they would unload their sacks of provisions elsewhere. "Each of them," Francois Ponchaud reports, "gave a bracelet, a ring, a necklace."<sup>4</sup> Van Saren, who ruled over Camp 204 and the surrounding area, began to set up his huge racket founded on hunger and misery by letting it be known that his soldiers and volunteers would be fed free of charge — which was an excellent recruiting argument. To tell the truth, no doubt the only one. At the same time, he resold the rest of his stock at from \$10 to \$12 a 15-kg bag. And he inaugurated

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his profitable escape route for refugees: 700 baht per person for passage from Camp 204 to the "legal" Camp Kao I Dang, administered by the UNHCR and equipped with a hospital where about 40 volunteers from the Border Doctors worked. Half-fare for children.

At that time, Van Saren shared his power with a strange fellow, Andre Uktol, according to some sources a French citizen. Uktol, who called himself Prince Norodom Soriavong, had arrived in Thailand in 1977 after a long stay in Paris where he had promoted various extreme right movements in the Cambodian community. Along with Van Saren, he had raised an army of young adventurers and alcoholics, violent and hallucinating. "Mak Moun was a hell," said a French witness. "Stoned on drugs and beer, their faces painted with bright colors, Soriavong's soldiers introduced a reign of terror. It was a little like the mad warriors' sanctuary of 'Apocalypse Now.'"

Between the bogus marshal and the bogus prince, coexistence and the sharing of their gains and the girls could not last for very long. People say today that on 17 January, after a council of war, Uktol was executed by a commando of Van Saren's soldiers. But there is also another rumor making the rounds, according to which Uktol is not dead, but in hiding somewhere far from the border. Unverifiable. About Cambodia, we have almost no news, except that during the past 2 months things seem to have been going a little less badly. At any rate, credible witnesses claim that international aid and a great deal of aid from the socialist countries is being distributed, that the schools, hospitals and dispensaries are opening, that the country is undergoing a rebirth. Nevertheless, the fact remains that in many regions such aid has not arrived or is insufficient.

This is, at any event, confirmed by the account of a Cambodian peasant we came across at Nong Mak Moun where he had come with 10 or so fellow Cambodians in search of rice:

"I come from Phnom Shroc, a village of 1,000 inhabitants, 52 km from Sissophon, slightly to one side of the Sissophon-Siem Reap main artery. This is my third trip to Thailand. Each time, I bring back 50 kg of rice on my bicycle, a little soap, some cloth. Just enough to feed the six people in my family. Because of the drought and the poor condition of the ricefields, the last harvest was very poor. The Vietnamese have authorized us to keep the rice in the village and each month they distribute among us 1 kg of rice or red corn per person. It's too little. A lot of people go hungry. They go into the forest to gather mushrooms and roots or they come here. And they eat soup. In Cambodia, when you don't have rice, you eat soup."

"And what happens if you run into a Vietnamese patrol?"

"Generally, the Vietnamese soldiers let us through after confiscating our goods and half the rice. They undress us and search us, even the women, and then let us through."

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Thus every day dozens of Cambodian peasants cover as much as 200 or 300 km to come to Thailand for supplies. In the border camps, we come across them constantly, pushing their bicycles overloaded with bundles or perched on piles of Coca-Cola cases, bags of rice, cans of milk, cartons of cigarettes, bolts of cloth tied to their oxcarts. "The only things the Vietnamese do not really want to see come into Cambodia," a Western expert said, "are lighter flints, medicines and black cloth. Otherwise..."

The Vietnamese soldiers and the Cambodian leaders doubtless know that this ant-like trade across the border is indispensable for the survival — and hence the neutrality — of part of the population of Cambodia. And while they leave the peasants half of their rice, it is not only, as my informant thinks, "because it is too heavy to carry," but because it is to their political and military advantage to do so. For while famine has been staved off in Cambodia, it has not yet been avoided. UNICEF director James P. Grant claimed this to be the case on his return from a stay in Phnom Penh: "The dry season harvest will be a disaster. They will have to import 18,000 tons of food in March and 25,000 tons in April to cover the food shortage."

And, as was the case last fall, this will no doubt not be enough. They will have to supplement these ship and air deliveries by keeping open or even increasing the number of distribution centers set up in September by the Red Cross and UNICEF. In 4 months time, these have at no charge supplied Cambodian peasants with 30,000 tons of food, enough to feed 800,000 people in Cambodia. And this despite the threats and raids of the traffickers who attack the centers to fill their stores and eliminate the competition of free distributions.

There is no shortage of examples. Thus on 30 December a band of armed men attacked the Nong Jan distribution center, destroyed the field hospital set up by the CICR, looted the food stores and dispersed civilians who were waiting for their bags of rice, canned goods and oil. The assailants were neither Red Cambodians nor Vietnamese, rather Van Saren's men. Despite the great amount of damage and the panic the operation produced, the center could be reopened a few days later under the protection of the Thai Army. At the start of 1980, it was estimated that, directly or indirectly, it fed from 110,000 to 150,000 people inside Cambodia.

Another example: On two occasions in early January, an unknown band attacked Camp 007 at Nong Samet, a few kilometers north of Nong Mak Moun. The testimony of witnesses varies as to the identity of the attackers and where they came from. It would appear they were Red Cambodians. But nothing is less certain than this. On the other hand, what is indisputable is the fact that, during the fighting, Van Saren's "troops," in principle having come to help the defenders of Camp 007, seem to have confused them with the enemy. "Van Saren," the head of Camp 007, In Sakhan, the founder of the Angkor Cambodian Liberation Movement, told us, "disarmed over 100 of our men and began to direct the camp population to his camp. In the

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days that followed, he organized a chain-belt of wagons and plundered everything he could. Not only rice, but mimeographs, motorcycles, typewriters, medicines, oxen."

Seated behind a long wooden table under a makeshift bamboo shelter at the entrance to his camp, located near water reserves set up by the Red Cross, In Sakhan, with his long black hair and shirt open baring a husky chest, assumes the style of a guerrilla rather than Van Saren's "resistance marshal" style. True, he is 14 years younger than his neighbor and enemy. Playing with his cheap ring set with an enormous oval of blue glass and speaking in French, he made laudable efforts to portray Van Saren as a crook and a scoundrel.

Backed by records, while ceremoniously signing an order for a mission, handwritten and on paper from a schoolboy's pad, he explained to us that he was henceforth in charge of 105,000 refugees:

"I receive from 1,300 to 1,500 sacks of food from the CICR three times a week: Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays. Rice, fish and oil. For the children, we receive aid from the Catholic Relief Service."

"Do you have an army?"

"Yes, 6,000 men or three brigades. But not all of them have weapons. We have two mortars here, one an 80-mm and the other a 60-mm, taken from the Vietnamese as are almost all our weapons..."

"But on arriving in the camp, I just now saw young soldiers, from 15 to 16 years of age, escorting refugees to market with brand-new M-16's on their shoulders. You didn't take those M-16's from the Vietnamese, did you?"

"Those are old weapons we buried during the 1970's in Cambodia. A year ago we dug them up..."

"Impossible. Those weapons are new. They are not M-16's made 5 or 6 years ago."

Silence. In Sakhan was not at all pleased with the direction the conversation was taking. He said that I no doubt wanted to get him to admit that he was receiving weapons from the Thai, that he was working with them and -- why not? -- that he was trafficking in rice while I was there. Why not? At the end of December, In Sakhan's command post was surrounded by a veritable wall of bags of rice, the refugees in his camp fed themselves with a broth made of weeds, roots and bark. To get rice, they had to have money. And they had to have gold ornaments or be willing to sell a daughter or a wife to a Bangkok pimp to get money from the Thai money changers. The center of a huge traffic, Camp 007 reflected to the point of caricature the charms and vices of the former Cambodian regime: a candlelight performance on Christmas Eve by the Royal Ballet of Phnom Penh on a bamboo

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stage, volleyball, bridge and chess tournaments, clubs for officers and intellectuals, markets, beauty parlors, houses of prostitution.

More so than the chaotic history of Camp 204 and its traffickers, the history of Camp 007 reveals the tensions gripping the community of Cambodian exiles on the border and also the pressures the Thai Government exerts on the refugees. These are in fact not simple rivalries among the people who provoked the departure of two former In Sakhan lieutenants from Camp 007. One of them, Moul Sary, the target of an assassination attempt, was forced to flee in mid-December with his fighters and place himself under the protection of the Thai. In Sakhan suspected him of having come to an agreement with the Thai Army to open the camp at Phnom Chat to the Red Cambodians. The other, Anduong Suvanakiri, left Camp 007 to seek refuge with several hundred men, half of them Red Cambodians and half Khmer Serei, in a temple near Prasat, north of Nong Samet. In Sakhan accused him of having received arms from the Red Cambodians and of letting Red Cambodian fighters join his army at the request of the Thai.

For the Thai are not merely content with taking their share of the border traffic. This mass of refugees, these weapons, and above all rice, the instrument of all the blackmail that goes on in the fuzzy handling of [ration] cards, represent formidable political influence for Bangkok's military leaders. It took General Kriangsak Chomanand, the Thai prime minister, today replaced by General Prem Tinsulanond, some time to become aware of it but, since they have incorporated these facts into their political and military strategy, the Thai Army's attitude has become a bit more flexible: Those who arrive are no longer systematically welcomed with mortar barrages.

But this "hospitality" is not without diplomatic ulterior motives, exhibited, moreover, with a steely kind of cynicism: "We have opened a camp for all the refugees on the border," a Thai general said in mid-November. "They will be fed by the United Nations and we will recruit them to go and fight the Vietnamese in Cambodia. We will do so with a Cambodian friend in whom we have confidence. Those who don't want to come to this camp will no longer receive food and we will prohibit them from having any access to the border to get food."

This general was not talking through his hat. For a century, Thai leaders have always known how to profit from the conflicts that tear apart their neighbors. As pragmatists, in the space of 40 years they have accepted Sihanouk, supported Lon Nol and, finally, given their consent to Pol Pot. The important thing for them has been to find a regime in Cambodia independent enough of Hanoi to provide a credible bulwark between Thailand and the hereditary Vietnamese enemy.

Following World War II, after having constituted an essential key to the United States' strategy of containment of the revolutionary advance in China and Indochina, Thailand has today become the first line of defense

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against Vietnamese "social imperialism" in the eyes of Peking. And this is a policy approved of and supported by both Washington and Peking, one which the Bangkok Government is implementing today with these historically damned, the Cambodian refugees, as its chief tool.

This is why for a year now Bangkok has been making an effort to consolidate and bring together the armed bands, numerous and disparate, which the border teems with. Since spring 1979, the biggest part of the job has been done: A front composed of Khmer Serei, anticommunist and anti-Vietnamese Cambodians has been improvised under the political control of Sonn San, Sihanouk's former prime minister and financial adviser and under the military leadership of General Dien Del who wields control over the 50,000 refugees in the camp at Ban Sa-Ngae, 60 km north of Aranyaprathet.

To patch together this strained federation of armed bands and resistance fighters, to convince the Khmer Serei, who are anticommunist, to fight alongside the Red Cambodians, who are fanatical communists, the military of the Thai Military Intelligence Department and their CIA friends, who run along the border in the big white American Embassy vehicles equipped with radiotelephones, have not been stingy with funds. Witness to the fact are the pressures exerted on Kong Sileah who today lives "2 nights march from the interior of Cambodia" with his fighters.

Kong Sileah, 45 years old, former Lon Nol Navy officer, graduated from the French Naval College in 1958, heads the MOULINAKA (Kampuchea National Liberation Movement) and calls himself a Sihanoukist, without being repudiated by the former Cambodian sovereign. Kong Sileah is generally felt to be the only resistance leader on the border who can be considered to be disinterested. "Not only is he honest," says a French monk who knows him well, "but he is even rigid, distant. He is the boss. Not at all the kind of fighter who would get involved with women in the camps."

Not at all the kind of man either who would trade the Thai Army's support -- in the form of weapons, rice, medicines and money -- for tacit collaboration with the Red Cambodians. For him, Pol Pot's followers are bloody madmen and even to fight the Vietnamese, it would be impossible for him to fight alongside them. So? So, on 8 November, after what happened at Camp 511, where Thai soldiers kidnaped two young Cambodian women refugees and killed eight guerrillas who went to look for them, a Thai Air Force observation plane flew over the camp where 30,000 of Kong Sileah's partisans were concentrated and dropped smoke bombs all over the place. And the 105-mm guns opened fire on them. The casualties: 200 dead and at least twice as many wounded. Kong Sileah and the survivors reached Camp 201 at Nong Jan where a Red Cross food distribution center is operated. This center was then attacked on 30 December by Van Saren's men with the blessing of the Thai and General Dien Del who for a long time has dreamed of crushing Kong Sileah's autonomy. Finally, "for security reasons" the Nong Jan center was closed on 7 February by the Thai Supreme Command.

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A month after the attack on Camp 511, Camp 208 became the target. A commando unit of 20 men sent by Dien Del first tried to assassinate the camp leader, judged to be too "independent" by the Khmer Serei. Stalemate. The Thai Army then took matters into their own hands and wound up crushing the recalcitrant groups with rockets and fragmentation shells.

At Camp 007, In Sakhan himself, despite what he may have to say about it, was forced to submit like almost all the others. A few weeks ago, a CIA representative came to him to propose that he fight with the Red Cambodians against the Vietnamese. Hesitation. But when General Dien Del in person bestirred himself, accompanied by a Red Cambodian leader who came from Phnom Chat and a Thai Military Intelligence officer, In Sakhan allowed himself to be convinced. True, in the event of his refusal, Dien Del and his fellow countrymen had threatened to "blow everything up."

The last episode dates back a few days. This time, it was Camp 204 which was the scene of a veritable bloodbath when a former Van Saren lieutenant tried to seize power by attacking Nong Mak Moun with mortars. Finally, Thai Army tanks, preceded by an artillery barrage, restored order among the ruins and dead bodies.

This strategy of Bangkok's, which a diplomat has summed up by announcing that "the Thai will fight Vietnam to the last Cambodian," is not a recent affair. Norodom Sihanouk himself had revealed its existence to three newsmen whom he received in April 1979 — thus a year ago — in Peking.<sup>6</sup> "As far as the outside world is concerned," Sihanouk explained, "the Thai claim to be neutral. But, in fact, they are not. The Thai are behind Pol Pot. For the Chinese, it's a second chance. They are very happy because they can prolong the war against the Vietnamese, since Pol Pot's followers are now very weary and smaller in number than before." At any rate, the latter appear to be like fish in water at the Sa Kaeo camp, 30 km from Aranyaprathet on the road to Bangkok, where with the aid of the UNHCR and various organizations (World Vision, CICR, MSF [expansion unknown]) the Thai Army has set up a "displaced persons" camp which, when I visited it in early February, sheltered 24,500 people. The head of the camp, "Mr Lim," who pretended not to be able to speak French and said he was a farmer, is really called Ta Kiang, speaks the fluent French of the Cambodian cadres and was under Pol Pot a district chief in Northeastern Cambodia.

Furthermore, his words betray him. It is the argument of the Red Cambodians he serves, blatantly, when he is questioned on the massacres of the Pol Pot era. "It's not true," he said, "that 3 or 4 million Cambodians have been dispersed, deported, murdered. That's impossible. The only bad thing that happened during the Pol Pot regime was the existence of Vietnamese spies or agents who had infiltrated after the end of French colonial rule." All around us, former (?) Red Cambodian fighters, clad in their black uniforms, come and go and talk to the husky young men who serve as "Mr Lim's" security guards. An odd camp... On the other side of the road, outside the barbed wire fence, the UNHCR maintains a small shack where the

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blackboard showing arrivals, deaths and births is kept up to date. There is no column for "departures." There are no departures. Diplomatic missions have no right to come here and question the refugees with regard to their emigration to Europe or the United States. These refugees will not leave Asia. They will one day go back to Cambodia, armed, or will become the Palestinians of Indochina.

There is no shortage of witnesses who recall their arrival in Sa Kao in November 1979, when the Red Cambodians, shoved about by the Vietnamese Army, engaged in what Francois Ponchaud calls "a macabre publicity operation to attract the attention of international public opinion to their plight."<sup>7</sup> A pitiful band of humans, 60,000 people: sick, exhausted, worn out, they arrived in little groups, shivering with cold and fever under the savage deluges of the monsoon and lay down to sleep or die under the inevitable blue tarpaulins strung on posts in the reddish mud of an 8-hectare plot rented from the Buddhist monks. In those days, nearly 100 a day of these wraithlike figures died and were buried, after covering them with quicklime, in pits big enough to hold a jeep. Today, Sa Kao is not the Club Mediterranee but there are water reserves, a health facility that is maintained, schools, meeting places, a pagoda, a sort of refreshment stand and even a field hospital where, among others, 21 MSF volunteers work. Something like normalcy is reappearing. But it is a life over which hangs the secret and threatening presence of the Angkar, the pitiless, blind and invisible "organization" of the Red Cambodians, in the name of which one of the worst genocides in the history of the world was committed. The refugees, silent, disciplined, lined up in single file for the rice distribution: the Angkar. The details that sweep the lanes: the Angkar. "Mr Lim's" bodyguard: the Angkar. The Angkar, which wanted blood in Cambodia, comes "up to the bellies of the elephants."

It is impossible to talk with "Mr Lim": "This camp is not a camp of politicians..." Still, in mid-January the strained coexistence between the tormentors and their victims gave way to a conflict so serious that, to avoid an explosion, the Thai authorities were forced to transfer some of the refugees, hostile to the Red Cambodians, to the camp at Mairut, 200 km to the south. A month later, other Sa Kao refugees in turn complained to UNHCR representatives that they were always subjected to orders from the Red Cambodians, who control the food supplies and exploit rice blackmail to incite the exiles to go back and fight in Cambodia.

Blackmail, threats, trafficking, poisoning: There is little hope that things may change, at least as long as the new cold war lasts. For American firmness vis-a-vis the Soviet Union and Chinese mobilization in the face of Soviet-Vietnamese expansionism are causing Washington and Peking to implement "mutually reinforcing initiatives" (Jimmy Carter) in Southeast Asia, designed to exert constant pressure on Hanoi. In Laos, these initiatives take the form of the creation of resistance groups armed and trained by Peking and then infiltrated from China. In Cambodia, they take the form of the forced unification of resistance groups under Red

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Cambodian leadership, the supplying of Chinese and American arms to Pol Pot's men and the forced recruitment of guerrillas in the refugee camps.

But by trying to dress up the murderers of the Cambodian people as liberators of Cambodia,<sup>8</sup> by keeping this fire going, by blowing the winds of war onto the ashes of a people, what are Peking, Washington and Bangkok really trying to do? They cannot seriously expect 30,000 Red Cambodians and 5,000 Khmer Serei to prevail over 200,000 Cambodian Bo Doi. At the outside, they can try to occupy the country with their men in the event that some day an international conference might come up with a diplomatic and political compromise solution. Actually, we can hardly ignore the fact that, in stirring up the hotbeds of Laotian and Cambodian guerrilla activity, they above all want to force Hanoi to keep hundreds of thousands of men in uniform who could be employed in the "reconstruction of Vietnam."

Poor Cambodia! Thrust into a war that was not of its own making through the blind obstinacy of Kissinger and Nixon,<sup>9</sup> delivered to the logical insanity of the Red Cambodians and saved from the holocaust through the Vietnamese invasion and occupation, here it is today the hostage of a latent confrontation between East and West, one of which it is not the real object, only the scene and the pretext.

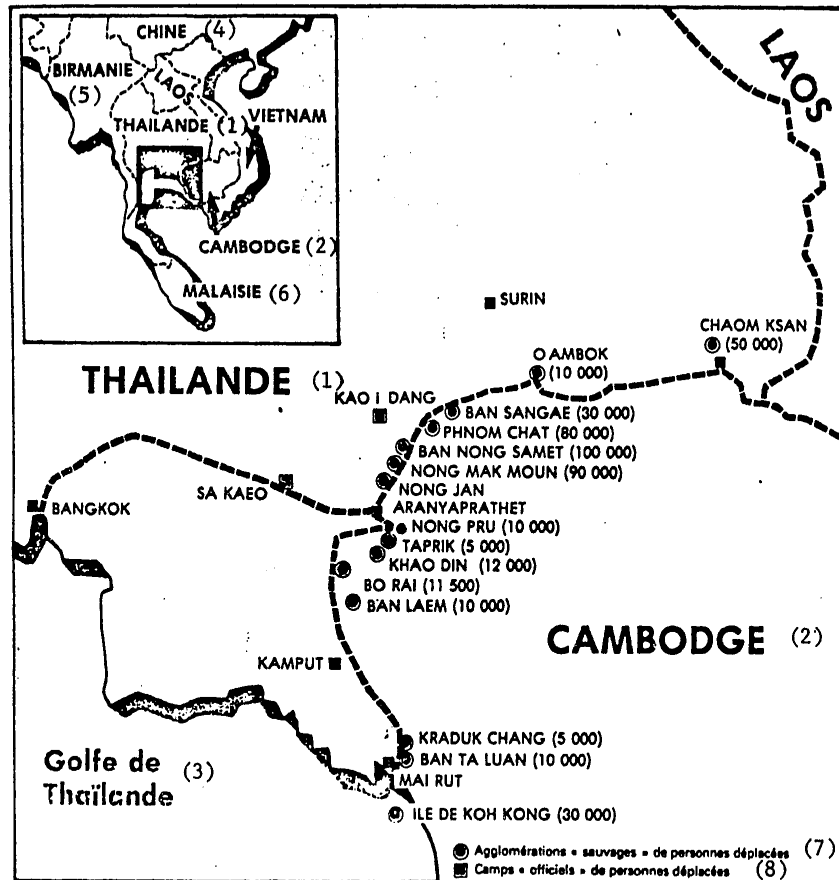
According to the latest news, the UNHCR will, with the approval of Phnom Penh and Hanoi, make an effort to promote a policy of "repatriation freely consented to" by the Cambodian refugees in Thailand. The Vietnamese and Cambodian governments presumably agree on "creating the necessary conditions" and, according to UNHCR coordinator for Southeast Asia Zia Rizvi, feel that "such a repatriation is not only possible, but even desirable."<sup>10</sup>

We would like to be able to believe it.

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The Border Camps



Key:

1. Thailand
2. Cambodia
3. Gulf of Siam
4. China
5. Burma
6. Malaysia
7. "Illegal" urban districts with displaced persons
8. "Official" displaced persons camps

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FOOTNOTES

1. Quoted in the FAR EASTERN ECONOMIC REVIEW of 7 December 1979, p 15.
2. The baht is the Thai national currency unit (1 franc = 5 baht).
3. Quoted by Sylvia and Jean Cattori in "The Thai Stake," Editions de l'Harmattan, 1979, p 111. This book, with a preface by Jean Zigler, is without a doubt one of the best analyses of the current situation in Thailand.
4. Francois Ponchaud (author of "Cambodia, Year Zero") in ECHANGE FRANCE-ASIE, Report No 51, January 1980, p 14.
5. Statement reported in Bangkok on 4 February 1980.
6. Sylvia and Jean Cattori (op. cit., p 212).
7. Francois Ponchaud (op. cit., p 12).
8. On the Cambodia of the Red Cambodians, read Pin Yathay's damning testimony, "The Deadly Utopia," Robert Laffont (anthology, "Experienced").
9. Nixon's and especially Kissinger's role in Cambodia's going to war was mercilessly demonstrated by William Shawcross in "A Tragedy of No Importance," Balland-France Adel.
10. Article by Roland-Pierre Paringaux, LE MONDE, 20 February 1980.

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KAMPUCHEA

## INFORMATION ON PRK MILITARY UNITS

[The following information was extracted from Phnom Penh Domestic Service broadcasts at 1230 GMT unless otherwise noted on the dates indicated, or from other sources as indicated. Unit designators and locations are as given. The remarks include a brief summary of the information available in the source.]

UNIT	REMARKS
Kompong Speu Military Command	Opened courses for province troops in logistics, Staff Command and politics (19 Mar 80)
Bn 2 Kandal Province Military Command	Attended political course, military training; normalized life, reclaimed land, transplanted rice (19 Mar 80)
Bn 3 in charge of defense of Phnom Penh	Chairman reported that after political and military training, new troops working in sanitation and production. (19 Mar 80)
Kamptot Military Command	Political training (29 Mar 80)
3d Bn Phnom Penh City	Troops helped people harvest rice, prepared fields for rainy-season rice planting (29 Mar 80)
1st Bn Koh Long Province	Helped people to settle down, prepare land for crop growing, people are beginning to plant rice (29 Mar 80)
Pursat Provincial Military Command	Opened literacy courses (2 Apr 80)
19th Bn Kompong Thom Province	Prepared conditions to transplant rice on 50 ha of land (5 Apr 80)

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7th Brigade	Elected hard cores who are outstanding fighters. They meet every month (5 Apr 80)
General Logistics Department	Opened second accountancy course for cadres at Finance school (23 Apr 80)
12th Bn	Drills to defend Kompong Som Port
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LAOS

## INFORMATION ON LAO MILITARY UNITS

[The following information was extracted from Vientiane Domestic Service broadcasts at 0400 GMT unless otherwise noted on the dates indicated, or from Lao press material as indicated. Unit designators and locations are as given. The remarks include a brief summary of the information available in the source.]

UNIT	REMARKS
Southern Region Army Fish Sauce Factory	Completed setting up kiln 2 weeks ahead of schedule (0000 GMT 12 Mar 80)
Ground Artillery Bn "A" Vientiane	Stepped up production, public service work and political study (17 Mar 80)
Air Defense Bn "G" Vientiane	Organized political study course since 10 Mar (17 Mar 80)
First Bn Vientiane	Medical cadres concluded campaign to vaccinate against dry season diseases (16 Mar 80)
Army Bn "G" Vientiane	Launched emulation campaign to welcome party anniversary (16 Mar 80)
Production Unit No 2 Army Logistics Department	Launched study program 2 Mar (16 Mar 80)
Military Training School Vientiane	Served students to hail party anniversary (16 Mar 80)
Air Force Command Vientiane	Held meeting 14 Mar to review achievements, studied 7th resolution of Party (18 Mar 80)
Vientiane Provincial Military Command	Opened political training course 15 Mar for study of 7th Resolution of Party (19 Mar 80)

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Company "S" attached to Bn "CH", Vientiane	Competed in carrying out tasks to score achievements to hail party anniversary (19 Mar 80)
Ground Artillery Bn "S" Vientiane	Built living quarters, studied politics, military subjects (19 Mar 80)
Construction Unit of Route 9 in Central Region	Built irrigation dike at Houai Songpuei (20 Mar 80)
LPLA Bn "S" Vientiane	Sent resolution adopted at recent political study to central party military commission and LPLA Supreme Command (20 Mar 80)
BN No 1 Vientiane	Reclaimed wasteland, repaired irrigation projects (21 Mar 80)
Women's Artillery Unit Vientiane	Expanded cultivated areas, studied politics (21 Mar 80)
Unit "B" attached to Army Logistics Department in Vientiane	Competed in carrying out tasks (21 Mar 80)
Central Region Military Command	Opened training course for first group of troops to study 7th Resolution of Party (21 Mar 80)
Autotransport Bn "T" Vientiane	Studied politics since 15 Mar (21 Mar 80)
Army Pharmacy No 104 Vientiane	Opened political course for study of 7th Resolution of Party Central Committee (22 Mar 80)
Southern Region Military Region	Closed political training for first group of troops, opened training for another 8 Mar (22 Mar 80)
Tank Bn "T" Vientiane	Held ceremony 22 Mar to give medals for achievements (22 Mar 80)
Bn No 1 Vientiane	Youths attached to Bn held meeting 19 Mar to review achievements (22 Mar 80)
All Three Offices attached to Houa Phan Province Military Command	Competed in scoring new achievements to welcome Party Anniversary (22 Mar 80)
Staff Office of Southern Region	Organized political training since 10 Mar (22 Mar 80)

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Army Garment Factory Southern Region	Competed in fulfilling specialized tasks for founding anniversary of party (23 Mar 80)
Youth Section under Army Political Department	Organized sports activities 21 to 23 Mar to mark LPRP anniversary (24 Mar 80)
Army Pharmaceutical Factory 104 Vientiane	Produced large quantities of medicine (24 Mar 80)
LPLA Logistics Department	Held ceremony to mark party anniversary (25 Mar 80)
Bn "A" Vientiane	Emulated to score achievements for 5th anniversary of LPDR expanding cultivated areas, dug 2 fish ponds (25 Mar 80)
Cultural School under Viangsai Military Region Command	Held examinations (25 Mar 80)
Military Training School Vientiane Sector	Held rally 24 Mar to mark party founding anniversary (26 Mar 80)
Infantry Bn "O" Vientiane	Opened new cultural training course in early Feb (26 Mar 80)
Infantry Bn "E" Vientiane	Stepped up production, education (26 Mar 80)
Signal Repair Company Vientiane	Held ceremony 25 Mar for party anniver- sary (27 Mar 80)
Army Art Troupe Vientiane	Scored achievements in art activities (27 Mar 80)
Defense Bn "S" Vientiane	Held ceremony 25 Mar on celebration of party anniversary (27 Mar 80)
Army Auto Repair Factory Vientiane	Held ceremony 25 Mar to celebrate party anniversary (28 Mar 80)
Northern Region Military Command	Held celebration of party anniversary (28 Mar 80)
Army Rice Mill Vientiane	Milled rice (28 Mar 80)
Louang Namtha, Phong Saly Provincial Military Commands	Opened training courses on 7th Resolution of party (28 Mar 80)



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Army Auto Repair Factory Vientiane	Repaired vehicles, built living quarters, did rice farming (29 Mar 80)
Army Agricultural Settlement #2, Vientiane	Held meeting to celebrate party anniversary (30 Mar 80)
Air Defense Bn "B" Vientiane	Opened another political course 14 Mar (30 Mar 80)
Army Logistics Department's Production Unit #2, Vientiane	Harvested crops (30 Mar 80)
Regional Forces, Louang Namtha Province	Consolidated, strengthened units in dry season (30 Mar 80)
Army Band Vientiane	Reaped dry season rice 21 Mar (31 Mar 80)
Northern Region's Political Office	Cleared virgin land for cultivation (31 Mar 80)
Viangsai Military Region	Held ceremony to mark party anniversary 22 Mar (1 Apr 80)
Bn "A" Vientiane	Held ceremony to mark party anniversary 27 Mar (1 Apr 80)
Bn "S" Vientiane	Held ceremony 30 Mar to give medals (1 Apr 80)
Army Medicinal Liquor Factory Vientiane	Held ceremony to mark party founding anniversary (1 Apr 80)
Army Hospital 03 [probably 103] Vientiane	Held ceremony 1 Apr to mark party anniversary (3 Apr 80)
Political Work Group Six attached to Viangsai Region's Army Cultural School	Compiled literature (3 Apr 80)
Army Animal Breeding Unit Vientiane	Started clearing virgin land early Jan (3 Apr 80)
Artillery Bn "B" Vientiane	Repaired buildings, offices (4 Apr 80)
Bn "S" Vientiane	Cleared land, raised animals (4 Apr 80)

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Construction Section Viangsai Region	Built warehouse, houses; produced bricks (4 Apr 80)
Southern Region's Kommadam School	Held rally 23 Mar to get medals (4 Apr 80)
Military Training School Vientiane	Opened course to study 7th Resolution of Party (4 Apr 80)
Army Garment Factory Vientiane	Continued production plan (7 Apr 80)
Public Security Forces Vientiane Province	Completed production plan for first half of 1980 by 80 percent (7 Apr 80)
Regional Forces, [Meuang] Gnot Ou District, Phong Saly Province	Scored achievements (6 Apr 80)
Army Garment Factory Vientiane	Produced 32,309 sets of uniforms in first 3 months of 1980 (6 Apr 80)
Infantry Bn "E" Vientiane	Studied 7th Resolution of Party (6 Apr 80)
Printing House of Army Political Department	Scored achievements in specialized work (6 Apr 80)
Army Noodle Factory Vientiane	Held meeting to mark party anniversary (8 Apr 80)
Infantry Bn "S" Vientiane	Organized study course for 7th Resolution of Party (8 Apr 80)
Bn "A" Vientiane Sector	Scored achievements (8 Apr 80)
Bn "A", Regional Forces of Phong Saly Province	Moved about mountains of Phong Saly Province to defend country (8 Apr 80)
Kommadam Intermediate Military Training School	Conducted political, military training since mid-Mar (9 Apr 80)
Ground Artillery School Vientiane Sector	Scored new achievements for LPDR anni- versary (9 Apr 80)
Infantry Bn "E" Vientiane	Studied 7th Resolution of Party (9 Apr 80)
Naval Transport and Repair Corps, Vientiane	Repaired equipment, built houses, trans- ported goods (10 Apr 80)

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Bn "A" Vientiane	Attended military, political courses, repaired vehicles, planted vegetables (10 Apr 80)
Southern Region Military Command	Closed 2nd conference 2 Apr for study of 7th Resolution of Party (11 Apr 80)
Luang Prabang Provincial Military Command	Opened meeting 13 Mar on new tasks for 1980 (11 Apr 80)
Auto Repair Company "A" Vientiane	Emulating to score achievements (11 Apr 80)
Vientiane Military Training School	Closed course to study 7th Resolution of Party (11 Apr 80)
Political Office attached to Southern Region Command	Studied 7th Resolution of Party early Apr (12 Apr 80)
Defense Bn "P" Vientiane	Youths attached to Bn held meetings, 4,6 Apr to review achievements (12 Apr 80)
Southern Region Command	Held ceremony 20 Mar to hail achievements (13 Apr 80)
Army Signal Repair School Vientiane	Paid attention to studying specialized subjects (13 Apr 80)
Bn "B" Vientiane	Held ceremony 13 Apr for awards (15 Apr 80)
Northern Region's Anti- Aircraft Bn "E"	Held ceremony 28 Mar on party anniversary (15 Apr 80)
Army Artillery Training School Vientiane	Held ceremony 19 Apr for awards (22 Apr 80)
Military Command of Sam Neua District	Opened conference 30 Mar on regional armed forces affairs (22 Apr 80)
Film Projection Team attached to Propaganda and Training Office of Northern Region	Gave film shows (22 Apr 80)
Unit "C" Viangsai Region	Held ceremony 25 Apr to present medals (22 Apr 80)
Guerrilla Forces Command in Houa Phan Province	Military training closed 31 Mar (22 Apr 80)

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Military Command Luang Prabang Province	Opened training to study 7th Resolution of Party (23 Apr 80)
Oudomsai Provincial Military Hospital	Competed in carrying out specialized tasks (23 Apr 80)
Auto Repair Branch attached to Logistics Department, Northern Region	Repaired vehicles, carried out other specialized tasks (24 Apr 80)
Engineering Bn "C" Southern Region	Competed in carrying out tasks in repair- ing roads, building bridges, houses (24 Apr 80)
Army Hospital in Saravane Province	Scored achievements (25 Apr 80)
First Bn Vientiane	Donated blood to Army Hospital in Vien- tiane (25 Apr 80)
Third Signal Company Xieng Khouang Region	Scored achievements (25 Apr 80)
Louang Namtha Provincial Military Command	Closed political, military training 19 Apr (26 Apr 80)
Kommadam School Vientiane	Art troupe of PRK Revolutionary Army gave performance 24 Apr (26 Apr 80)
Typing Unit attached to Northern Region's Propaganda Section	Typed 35,913 documents in first 3 months (26 Apr 80)
Army Medical Factory Vientiane	Produced large quantity of medicine (26 Apr 80)
Bn "A" under Xieng Khouang Region's Housing Construction Corps	Attended political, military courses, built houses (28 Apr 80)
Vientiane Region's Military Training School	Emulated to carry out tasks in building all-round strong companies (28 Apr 80)
Women's Artillery Unit in Vientiane Region	Held ceremony 26 Apr for awards (29 Apr 80)
Regional Armed Forces Bn "B" Vientiane Province	New building is 70 percent completed (29 Apr 80)
Engineering Bn "P" Southern Region	Built roads, bridges, repaired same, carried out other tasks (30 Apr 80)

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Kommadam Training School attached to Phong Saly Provincial Command	Scored achievements in planting crops, felling logs, collecting forestry pro- ducts (30 Apr 80)
Construction Bn "A" Phong Saly Province	Built living quarters, carried out other tasks (30 Apr 80)
Phong Saly Provincial Military Command	Opened training course to study 7th Resolution of Party (30 Apr 80)
Bn No 1 Vientiane	Donated blood (1 May 80)
Staff Office Houa Phan Provincial Command	Completed building living quarters, repaired others (1 May 80)
Production Unit No 3 attached to Army Logistics Department in Vientiane	Second achievements in specialized tasks (2 May 80)
Central Region hospital	Competed in serving people (2 May 80)
Road Construction Unit 2 in Central Region	Built and repaired roads, carried out other tasks (2 May 80)
Xieng Khouang Region's Signal Company	Transmitted and received copies of docu- ments, did other work (3 May 80)
Brick Factory under Xieng Khouang Regional Command	Produced bricks (3 May 80)
Xieng Khouang Region's Engineering Company "A"	Attended military course, loaded and un- loaded goods, engaged in agricultural production (4 May 80)
Xieng Khouang Region's Basic Medical Training School	Cleared land, raised animals (4 May 80)
Bn "A" attached to Xieng Khouang Region's Engineering Corps	Repaired warehouses, barracks; loaded and unloaded goods, attended military course (5 May 80)
Central Region's Aviation Corps	Received and transmitted telegrams, repaired equipment, attended political, military and cultural courses (5 May 80)
Kommadam Military Training School attached to Savannakhet Provincial Command	Held ceremony 25 Apr to mark end of political, military training course (1300 GMT 6 May 80)

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Aviation Unit in Central Region	Carried out specialized tasks (1300 GMT 6 May 80)
Ground Artillery Bn "A" Northern Region	Studied politics while felling logs, repairing houses, setting up paddy silos (7 May 80)
Medical Unit and Herbal Medicine Hospital, Northern Region	Cured patients, vaccinated, distributed medicine (7 May 80)
Propaganda and Training Office Army Political Department in Vientiane	Held ceremony 6 May for awards to art troupe (8 May 80)
Bn "A" Vientiane Region	Opened political training course 5 May (8 May 80)
Company "A" attached to Bn "CH" in Vientiane Region	Held ceremony 5 May to end military training (8 May 80)

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END